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JUST
PREJUDICES

Against the
Arian Hypothesis.

To which is added,

A Vindication of this Proposition,
*Articles of Faith depend upon Inferences,
or are left to Consequences.*

BY

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THE
INTRODUCTION.

THE Power of Irreligion and Vice has produced such evil Practices and dissolute Manners thro' the whole Kingdom, that the Observation of this universal Depravity has filled the Minds of vertuous and considerate Men, with great Trouble and fearful Apprehensions: Such Persons are very sensible, that dreadful Calamities and Desolations are the frequent and natural Consequence of great Degeneracy and Corruption; that Ambition, Pride, Fraud

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and insatiable Avarice, will bring the most flourishing State into the most deplorable Condition; for as they load a Nation with Guilt, so they themselves often inflict the Punishment of it, and are at once the meritorious and effective Causes of a People's Sufferings, and often of their utter Ruin and Destruction. The intoxicating Power of these Vices has lately brought upon this Nation, a Nation never look'd upon as destitute of Understanding and common Prudence, such a stupid Infatuation, and such a wonderful Suspension of Common Sense, as have plung'd us in the greatest Disorder and Confusion, by bringing upon us an extraordinary and surprizing Diminution of our publick Credit; a Calamity, which undistinguishing as the Grave, has involv'd without respect of Persons, the High and the Low, the Wise and the Foolish, the Peer and the Citizen, the Soldier and the Merchant; and affects by its hurtful Influence, some way or other, Men of all Conditions whatsoever.

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This Calamity, as all agree, is owing to the Spirit of Pride, the Fury of Gaming, and the unextinguishable Thirst after Riches, which possess all Ranks and Degrees of Men. For tho' a Prince and his Ministry should form the wisest Schemes for the publick Good, yet if there should happen at that Time, such a Dearth and Desolation of Justice and Probity among the Subjects, as will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to find out Men of sufficient Vertue and Capacity to execute those Schemes, the weak or wicked Under-Agents will infallibly make such Designs miscarry; while those evil Servants load their Shoulders with the Spoils and Plunder of the Publick, and glut themselves, like greedy Leeches, with the Blood they suck from the People's exhausted Veins. These rapacious Oppressors will gather to themselves immense Riches by the Ruin of their Neighbours; to advance their Families, will distress, and, if they are able, undo the Government; and, like ravening Vultures,
prey

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prey upon the Bowels of their Native Country.

BUT what is the sinking of National Credit, tho' a very great Affliction, to the deplorable Fall of Piety and Probity among us? The Wisdom and Justice of the Legislature may find out a Remedy to recover and re-establish the first; but unless some Ways are discovered, and prosecuted with Vigour, to revive our languishing Religion and Vertue, which seem to be agonizing, and at the last Gasp, Vice and Impiety will inevitably bring about, if not the same, yet as great and perhaps more destructive Evils, than those that are now so sorely complain'd of. But this desirable Restoration can never be brought about, while impious Principles, that strike at the Foundations of Religion and Morality, are propagated with Success, and spread their Contagion among the deluded People; many of whom are grown Sceptical and embrace no Scheme of Religion; and others are arrived at that enormous
Height

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Height of Impiety, that they not only in Conversation spitefully insult and deride the Christian Institution, and all Things Sacred and Divine; but, in their printed Books, revive and vindicate atheistical Notions; and, with unexampled Impudence, affront and expose, by profane Mimickry, the Sacred Mysteries of the Gospel, as the Author of an impious Writing has lately done: For let profligate Wits, sneering Scoffers and merry Libertines think what they please, it is certain, that as such Indignities and Affronts, offer'd to the God of Heaven, and the Blessed Founder of the Christian Church, will arm the Almighty's Hand, and stretch forth his avenging Arm, against the Professors and Practicers of such Impiety, which even Almighty Patience cannot always bear; so is it true, that such irreligious Principles, and profane Practices will produce that Wickedness and Corruption, which, of themselves, will bring on the most fatal Calamities. If the same Causes will always produce the same Effects,

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fects, and the same Passions will be attended with the same Events, then those Miseries and Desolations, that in other Countries, and other Ages, have been occasioned by licentious Manners, and a general Defection from Piety and Vertue, may justly be expected in any Nation where the Case is the same; for a degenerate and vicious People will inevitably destroy themselves, for want of sufficient Goodness and Vertue to support their State.

SINCE therefore irreligious Principles are productive of Immorality and flagitious Life, by removing all Restraints, that should check inordinate Inclinations and impure Habits, it is Time that all Hands should be at Work; and that every Man, that reveres God, and loves his Country, should stir himself up, and exert all his Strength and Capacity, to stop the Progress of impious Opinions: For it is very certain that there never was a greater Necessity than now for opposing, as well by
Writing

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Writing as by Conversation, the pernicious Notions of the Atheist and the Infidel. How can Men, that have a Concern at Heart for the Honour of God, the Interest of Religion, and the prosperous State of the Christian Church, if endowed with any Talents, chuse a cold and unactive Neutrality, and forbear to use their Endeavours to stem the Deluge of Irreligion and Unchristian Doctrines, that, in this Juncture, is ready to break in upon us, and overflow the Nation? How, I say, can Persons of such a Character indulge an indifferent supine Temper, and not labour to avert the imminent Danger, which not only threatens the Peace, but the very Being, of Christian Societies? For is it not a sad Reflection, that while the Impious in Principle, from an inveterate Hatred of Religion, strike at the Root of all Divine Worship, the Infidel, with as great Vehemence, strives to shake the Foundations of the Gospe Revelation; and while they propagate their Maxims with eager Zeal, and poison the Kingdom with their detestable

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Opinions, they triumph at once in their Success and Impunity.

BESIDES this, the Spirit of Heresy is gone out amongst us, and ancient exploded Errors, that once rent the Church, reviv'd and supported by a numerous and violent Party, have miserably divided this unhappy Nation; and therefore, it is no Wonder that flagitious Manners overspread the Kingdom, and that such a universal Desertion from Piety and Vertue prevails, while Righteousness and common Honesty grow yet more valuable and precious by their Scarcity, and the serious Practice of Religion exposes a Christian to Derision, Hatred, and Contempt. Since this therefore is the melancholy State to which we are reduc'd, I look upon it as the Duty of every Man in his Station, to contribute his utmost Endeavours towards the stopping of this growing Mischief, which, by getting Head, and gaining upon us, may involve the Nation in the greatest Calamities. And this

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this I hope will be a just Apology, at least with Men of a generous and publick Spirit, who wish well to Religion and their Country, for my engaging in the Defence of God's Existence against the *Atheist*; and in Vindication of the Christian Religion against the *Deist*; and of the Divinity of Christ against the *Arian* and *Socinian*: I have attempted the First in a former Writing, entitul'd *Creation*; and have prepar'd against the two Last, a Book intended to be sent Abroad; and, as a Fore-runner of that larger Volume, I have thought it proper to publish this Discourse against the *Arian* Scheme, the fashionable Herefy of the present Times; which contains just and reasonable Prejudices against that Hypothesis.

IN the first Place, it is a just Prejudice against the *Arian* Doctrine, that the contrary Opinion generally prevail'd in the Christian Churches, and was profess'd by them thro' so great a Number of Ages. It cannot be suppos'd, that

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the Divine Being, infinitely Wise and Good, should publish a Revelation of his Mind and Will, so much wanting to the World, in such Phrases and Expressions, that (incomparably) the greatest Part of those who received his Divine Doctrine, even all the believing Churches, thro' numerous Centuries, and those too, who seal'd their Sincerity with their Blood, should grossly misapprehend its Meaning in the most important Article of it, and should interpret it in such a Sense, as led them, if the *Arian* Opinion is true, to down-right Idolatry: It cannot, I say, be imagin'd that the God of Truth, who made known the Gospel Revelation, to rectify Mens Mistakes in Religion, and abolish the Idol Worship of the Pagans, should express himself in such a Manner, as was apt to prevail so far upon the Minds of almost all Christians, even the best and wisest of them, as to carry them into Idolatry, which it was intended utterly to destroy, and which they so much abhor'd, that Multitudes of them prefer'd

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the Arian Hypothesis. 13

Tortures and Death to the Practice of it; yet this is the Case, if Christ be no more than a Creature.

AND should it be urg'd by the *Arian* or other Hereticks, that the Article of Christ's Divinity is not reveal'd in such clear Expression, and set in such a full Light, but that Multitudes of worthy and learned Men, after all their Care and Application, are not able to discern it, but continue to believe that the contrary Opinion is warranted by the Scripture; and should they thence argue, that it is inconsistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to publish a Revelation of his Mind in such a way, that after their impartial Examination of the sacred Writings, they are incapable of discovering that Sense which the Orthodox put upon them; but affirm, that as far as their Lights extend, they are fully perswaded that they are to be taken in a contrary Meaning; should this, I say, be alledg'd, I thus reply: The most important Points of Religion may
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be fully and sufficiently reveal'd, notwithstanding many wise and learned Men may not yield their Assent to the Evidence of it. The first Article of all Religion, the Existence of God, is sufficiently attested by the Light of Nature and the Dictates of right Reason, and fully demonstrated by the Works of Creation and Providence, as *St. Paul* argues to convince the Heathen; nevertheless, Multitudes of learned Men, and of the great Wits of the World, particularly, the Followers of *Democritus*, *Epicurus*, and the *Fatalists*, heretofore and in the present Age, deny the Being of God; and the *Pyrrhonians*, and the Disciples of the new Academy, declar'd their Opinion, that his Existence could not be prov'd; which amounts almost to the same Thing. And for many Years these impious and sceptical Principles prevail'd in the Schools of *Athens* and *Rome*. But will any say, That the Article of God's Existence was not sufficiently manifested by the Light of Nature, notwithstanding great Numbers

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bers of Philosophers and wise Men did not embrace it? In like manner, abundance of Persons, who have no small Share of Wit and Learning, oppose the Christian Revelation, and declare, that after all their Search and Examination, they cannot find convincing Proof to support it; and yet I believe, That the *Arian* himself being Judge, the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion are demonstrated by clear and certain Evidence: And therefore, the Truth of the Revelation of Christ's Divinity may stand on stable and certain Foundations, notwithstanding the Disbelievers of that Article should be allow'd to be considerable for Number and Learning, in the same manner as the Truth of God's Existence and the Christian Institution is establish'd on full Evidence, notwithstanding the Atheist does not discern the First, nor the Infidel the Last. It is therefore a just Presumption, that the Interpretation of the Scriptures concerning the Divinity of Christ, which the
Churches

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Churches so long embrac'd and so strenuously vindicated, is right and true, and that of the *Arian*, false.

THE foregoing warrantable Prejudice against the *Arian* Hypothesis, is founded on the Wisdom, Truth, and gracious Nature of God; the next, which I shall mention, and which abundantly strengthens and confirms the former, is built on his faithful and inviolable Promises contain'd in his Gospel.

OUR Blessed Saviour assur'd his Disciples, that he would send the sacred Spirit, the Comforter, *Who should lead them into all Truth*; which must at least mean, into all great and important Truths. When our Lord commission'd his Apostles *to go and teach all Nations*, he promis'd *to be with them to the End of the World*: Which must signify, that he would be with them in the Work about which they were sent; that is, the teaching all Nations his
reveal'd

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reveal'd Religion, at least that he would be with Them and assist Them, when they taught the principal and most necessary Articles of it. Add to this, the promissory Prediction of Christ, that *the Gates of Hell should never prevail over his Church.* Now, who will shew how these Promises have been made good, or rather have not been violated, if the Christian World has not been led so much as into the Knowledge and right Belief of the most considerable, and indeed essential Point of the Gospel Revelation; but, on the contrary, have been suffer'd, through so many Ages, to lie under such a strong and terrible Delusion, as to mistake their Fellow Creature for their Creator, and to worship him as God supreme? This is true, if the *Arian Hypothesis* be not false: And then will it not be evident as Noon-day, that the Gates of Hell, that is, the Powers of Darkness, have in the most notorious Manner prevail'd and triumph'd over the Church, which is

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what our Saviour assur'd his Disciples should never come to pass?

THE *Arian* Scheme must therefore not only shake, but entirely subvert, the Christian Institution; nor will it be possible for all the Wit of Man to uphold it, if the Divinity of Christ be given up: For let us suppose, that the Infidel or Deist, to overthrow the Belief of the Christian Religion, should thus reason with the *Arians*. “ We are afraid, that
“ you, Gentlemen, that vindicate the
“ Revelation of the Gospel, and persuade us to embrace it, do not act a
“ sincere part; for how can you be in
“ earnest in professing your Belief of a
“ Creed, and making Profelites to a
“ Religion, which evidently destroys it
“ self? You assert, that it is reveal'd
“ from Heaven, that Christ, the Founder
“ of your Religion, is in Reality no
“ more than a Creature, a God made,
“ and not the same in Nature and Substance with God supreme: This is
“ your

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“ your Doctrine. Now since it is no-
“ torious that the contrary Article of
“ Faith, that is, that *Christ is God* in
“ the strictest and highest Sense of the
“ Word, has been profess’d and main-
“ tain’d universally by the Christian
“ Churches for at least Fourteen Hun-
“ dred Years; it will thence plainly fol-
“ low, that the Predictions and Pro-
“ mises, which Christ made to his Apo-
“ stles, were never made good, but were
“ meer Illusions. *He promis’d to be*
“ *with them to the End of the World,*
“ *while they taught his Religion: That*
“ *they should be led by his Spirit into all*
“ *Truth, and that the Gates of Hell*
“ *should not prevail over his Church.*
“ But since these Things predicted and
“ promis’d never came to pass, but on
“ the Reverse, the Article of Christ’s Di-
“ vinity, which has been received by
“ the Church for so many Ages, is, in
“ your Judgment, contrary to the Scrip-
“ tures, you must be constrain’d to al-
“ low, that Christ has not been with,
“ nor assisted his Apostles, in teaching

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“ the World : nor have they been led in-
“ to all Truth ; nor have the Gates of
“ Hell, and the Powers of Darkness,
“ been hinder’d from prevailing over
“ the Church in the most Triumphant
“ manner : All which Consequences
“ must certainly be true, if the Church,
“ for so many Ages, has been so horri-
“ bly deluded, as to believe a Creature is
“ God supreme, and to adore him as such.
“ Impiety and idolatrous Practices, so
“ general and so lasting, are an Evidence
“ uncontroulable that those Promises
“ were never fulfill’d, but plainly viola-
“ ted ; and therefore may the Infidel say
“ to the *Arian*, We have, from what has
“ been alledg’d, good Grounds to be-
“ lieve, that the Revelation you contend
“ for, is a meer Fiction and Imposture.

WHAT the *Arian* will reply to this,
I cannot conceive ; but let him exert all
his Strength, and exhaust all his Wit and
Philosophy, I am persuaded he will never
be able to defend himself against such a
Charge, in the Opinion of impartial
Judges.

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AND this leads to another mighty Prejudice against the *Arian* Principles; that is, that we shall be oblig'd, if we espouse them, to pronounce all the Christian Churches, almost ever since their Institution, and all their excellent Leaders, Men renown'd and admir'd for their superior Learning, and exemplary Piety, guilty of gross Idolatry; since that Sin has universally been defin'd, the giving of the Worship, due to the supreme God, to any of his Creatures: Nor do I see how this dreadful Consequence can be avoided; and if it cannot, then must this Conclusion be allow'd, that all Christians, almost in all Ages, are depriv'd of the Favour of God, and condemn'd to everlasting Misery, if avow'd and unrepented of Idolatry will exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven. Is it not with the utmost Horror that we must think, that the numberless Number of *Anti-Arians*, even those that were endow'd with the greatest Wisdom, Purity and Piety, are, after their careful and impartial Endeavours to understand
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the true Meaning of the Scripture, of which they embrac'd, as they believ'd, the plain, literal, and obvious Sense, should be all consign'd to endless and intolerable Punishment? Ye pure and blameless Saints! ye illustrious Confessors! who have witness'd a good Confession, and have liv'd and dy'd in the Belief of our Saviour's Deity, how, to comply with *Arian* Principles, shall I give you up to the Wrath of God and eternal Perdition? Ye noble Army of Martyrs, who laid down your Lives in the elder and later Ages, as well in Foreign Countries as in this reform'd Kingdom, and seal'd by your Blood your sincere Belief of Christ's Religion, what Reluctance, what Emotions, what Agonies must I feel, when I pronounce you guilty of Idolatry; and not only despoil you of the Martyr's Crown, but exclude you from the pure Assembly of the Bless'd, and the Joys of Heaven? This is with me a great and reasonable Prejudice against the *Arian* Hypothesis, that it is attended with such dreadful

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the Arian Hypothesis. 23

Consequences, as involves so vast a Body of Christians, during so many successive Centuries, in the Guilt of downright Idolatry.

AND this will carry us on to another just Prejudice against the *Arian Hypothesis*; which is, that it too closely imitates the Pagan Scheme of Theology. The Heathen Nations, besides their Superior, worship'd Inferior and Subordinate Gods, *Demons*, and deceas'd Men deify'd, who were stil'd Heroes. These had their Temples, Altars and Priests, and thro' them the Votaries directed their Worship to the Supreme Deities. These were employ'd as Intercessors to carry their Prayers to the upper Divinities in Heaven, and to bring down Favours and Blessings to Men on Earth. Their Sages and Philosophers, and Persons of Distinction, could not be so stupid as to terminate their Worship in a senseless Piece of Wood or Stone; but they directed their Adoration thro' the Idol to the Deity represented by it.

In

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In like Manner, the *Arians* suppose a Supreme God, and One Subordinate, an Inferior Created God, to whom they pay the highest Divine Honours, but not as to the ultimate Object of their Worship, which they convey thro' him; as they say, to God supreme. This lower created Deity, they apply to as their Intercessor, to present their Petitions to God most high, and to procure Gifts and Blessings for them by his Mediation.

THE Reform'd Churches condemn the Popish for following the Example of the Heathens, by their Invocations of Saints and Angels, in the Manner practis'd by them to their Dæmons and Heroes; and how then the *Arian*, upon his Principles, can charge Idolatry either upon the Pagan Worshippers, or those of the Church of *Rome*, as the most considerable Protestants for Number, Learning and Piety, have always done, especially those of this Nation, who first separated from that Church,

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I acknowledge that I cannot imagine.

I HAVE conceiv'd another Prejudice against the modern *Arians*, on which I crave the Reader's leave to dwell somewhat longer, because it is a Matter of great Importance, and which has not, as far as I know, been handled by any former Writer.

WE *Anti-Arians* acknowledge, that we pay the Worship due to God alone, to One, who, as our Adversaries assert, is but a Creature. To this Object we convey our Adoration, as to God supreme; nor by the Intention of our Minds, do we direct it through him, to any superior Being, but make our Worship terminate in Himself, as worthy of it. Now if this be not Idolatry in the Opinion of the Disbeliever of Christ's Deity, then I know not what can be so; and if it be, then I ask the *Arian*, how he can hold Religious Communion with those, who, in his Opinion, are Idolaters? And why he does not think it his Duty to separate from them? I

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cannot imagine, how a Disbeliever of Christ's Divinity can, with any Peace and Quiet of Mind, continue a Member of any religious Society, while he knows that the Members of it are generally given up to such Impiety. Can they remain in the Communion of such Criminals, without partaking of their Sin? Can they do all the outward Acts, which Idolaters practise, and by a mental reserv'd Sense and secret Meaning, think to excuse themselves from the Guilt of such Compliance?

If these Gentlemen, while they act in this manner, think to excuse themselves, by saying, that they do not terminate their Worship on Christ, whom they suppose to be a Creature, but direct their Adoration through him, to the supreme Being; then what way will they maintain their Charge of Idolatry against the Heathen, who directed his Worship by and through intermediate and inferior Deities, to their supreme Divinity? And how will our pious and venerable Reformers defend their Separation

the Arian Hypothesis. 27

ration from the Church of *Rome* upon the account of Idolatry, of which they accus'd her, as it is evident they did, and which the learned Bishop *Stillingfleet* has fully prov'd, when the *Romanists* still declar'd, that they directed their Worship ultimately to the supreme God? I do not here consider, whether the Church of *Rome* was then really guilty of Idolatry: But this is what I affirm, that our first Reformers believ'd she was, and upon that Belief thought it their Duty to withdraw from her Communion. Now since the Gentlemen of *Arian* Principles do, and must believe that the Orthodox are really Idolatrous, by paying ultimately Divine Worship to a Creature, they are oblig'd, upon Protestant Principles, to withdraw themselves from our Communion, and freely declare the Reasons of their Separation. It is therefore in vain that they earnestly demanded it as their Right, that no restraining Tests, Confessions or Declarations, but what are conceiv'd in express Words of Scripture, should

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be impos'd as Terms of Christian Communion, nor that any Party Notions should enter into publick Liturgies; for supposing they obtain'd their Desire, and that all Things in Religion were left in their utmost Latitude, yet it is evident, that they would still be indispensably oblig'd to forsake our Church Assemblies, and renounce religious Fellowship with us, whom they esteem Idolaters. Instead therefore of their vehement and repeated Complaints about narrow Conditions of Communion, which, without many Wiles and Evasions that pinch the Conscience, they cannot comply with, (though this, however, they make a shift to do) and which hinders them from making an open and unreserv'd Profession of their Doctrine: Instead, I say, of this, let us suppose, that all discriminating Tests and Declarations were abolish'd, what would this avail them? If they are sincere and upright Men, they will still find themselves bound to separate from our Assemblies; and tho' the Church should
not

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not renounce them, yet is it evident they are oblig'd to renounce the Church, and withdraw themselves from the Practisers of Idolatry, as before has been explain'd. On the other Hand, the *Anti-Arian*, who sees that the *Arian* pays the Worship, due to God alone, to One, who, as he believes, tho' he calls him God, is no more than an Excellent Creature, he must pronounce him guilty of Idolatry, notwithstanding the Pretence, common to him with the Pagans and Papists, of directing their Worship thro' the Creature to the Supreme God; and if that be their Belief, they are oblig'd to refuse Communion with the *Arian*. Thus the *Arian*, and the *Anti-Arian*, while each believes that each is an Idolater, are in Conscience bound to break off religious Communion with each other.

IT is very plain, that the Spirit of *Arianism* is very different from the Spirit of the Christian Confessors and Martyrs, who asserted openly, with worthy Fortitude and Resolution, their Principles of

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of Religion, refusing Communion with Idolatrous Societies; to preserve their Innocence and Integrity, they expos'd themselves to the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors, and not only underwent the Sufferings of Imprisonment, Chains, and Tortures, but laid down their Lives, with invincible Patience and Courage, rather than comply with the Rites and Ceremonies of forbidden Worship: But if our modern Opposers of Christ's Divinity argue right, that they are warranted to joyn in the external Expressions of Divine Worship with Idolatrous Assemblies, while they convey their Worship by a mental Direction thro' a Creature to the Supreme Being, then our glorious Martyrs were Martyrs to their own Ignorance and Weakness, and expos'd themselves foolishly to Torments, Poverty, Shame, and Death it self, for want of that Skill in Distinctions, secret Meanings, and evasive Arts, by which *Arians* at this Day continue Members of Societies, which they look upon as Idolatrous, and perform

the Arian Hypothesis. 31

form all Things which are enjoyn'd by them. Again, therefore, I demand how they can defend their constant Communion with such impious Churches? Let them here try the Strength of their boasted Reason, let them employ all their Skill in Criticism, and, as wise Philosophers, sincere Christians, and honest Men, shew us how they can extricate themselves from this Difficulty, and make it appear that it is lawful for them to communicate constantly with those Churches, whose main Article of Faith they disbelieve and detest: Let them, I say, in a free and open Manner, such as becomes the Professors of the Religion of Christ, tell us how they can maintain the Testimony of a good Mind, while they continue Members of those Congregations, who, as they well know, worship with the highest Honours One, who, in the Opinion of the *Arian*, is but a made Being, and by so doing violate the chief Precepts of Religion, and without Shame or Remorse act a most insincere Part toward God and Man.

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BUT to set this Matter yet in a clearer Light, I will allow this Principle, which, in my Opinion, is founded on solid Reason, that, in Matters of Eternal Salvation, every Man has a Right to judge for himself; and that, without this Privilege, our Reformers could never have justify'd their Separation from the Church of *Rome*; whence I acknowledge it will follow, that every Man has an unquestionable Liberty to determine for himself, by the best Means in his Power, the Sense of those Texts that concern his everlasting Felicity.

Now what Advantage will they gain from this Concession, unless, by the Force of their superior Learning, and boasted Abilities in Disputation, they can criticise and interpret away the first and second Commandment, and all the other Sacred Texts, that forbid Idolatry, and strictly enjoin us to renounce Communion with Societies which are openly guilty of such Impiety? If to terminate the highest religious Honours on a Creature, as on God Supreme,
be

the Arian Hypothesis. 33

be the Crime we are speaking of, as all agree it is, then in whatever Sense they shall take those Scriptures, which concern the Controversy between us, they will never disengage themselves from their Obligation of separating from our religious Assemblies; where, as we openly declare, we worship our Blessed Mediator, as God Supreme, and carry not our Worship beyond himself, and therefore must be condemn'd by them, who esteem him no more than a Created Being, as down-right Idolaters.

IT is very evident, as well from common Conversation, as the various Writings, lately publish'd, in Vindication of the *Arian* Principle, which respects the Divinity of Christ, that great Numbers, as well of the Clergy as the Laity, did never embrace the Catholick Doctrine in that Article, or have plainly apostatiz'd from it, while, notwithstanding, they hold Communion with our Churches, whom they must look upon as Idolatrous, as has been said, for paying Supreme Honours to a Creature. I am therefore very sensible that

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I may create Disorder and Disturbance among these Men, and fill them with anxious Concern and uneasy Reflections; for if they cannot satisfy their Minds, which upon good Grounds they never can, that it is lawful for them to continue Members of Societies, which avow such Impiety, without partaking of their Guilt, they must either separate from them, or remain in their Communion with Self-Condernation and Remorse. If, as they ought to do, they chuse the first, a new Division, and who can help it, will be added to the too great Number, into which the *British* Protestants are already split; but if they chuse the last, they expose themselves to the utmost Danger of making Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, and the sad Consequence of wilful Compliance with Idolatrous Practices.

I READILY acknowledge, that in many Cases of Controversy about religious Doctrines, which are of a lower Concern, and of a more doubtful Nature, where Christians may safely differ from each other, and which Side soever
of

the Arian Hypothesis. 35

of the Question they maintain, will run no Hazard of their eternal Salvation, in such inferior Matters: I say, where wise and good Men may, without hurting the publick Peace, defend contrary Opinions in Divinity; I own, that it is the most prudent Way to suppress even the Truth, when it may disturb the Tranquility of the Church, and is likely to prove more detrimental than advantageous: But in Matters of the greatest Consequence, when the first and chief Articles of Christianity, which nearly affect our external Salvation, are call'd in Question, and warmly oppos'd; Truths, of so high a Nature, and such vast Importance, are never to be suppress'd upon any Consideration whatsoever. These are Truths that may and must be spoken at all Times; and he that is afraid and asham'd of vindicating openly a necessary Article of the Gospel Revelation, and of dissuading his Neighbour from the Commission of Idolatry, has great Reason to be afraid that his Lord will be asham'd of him in the great Day of Account.

36 *Fast Prejudices against*

UPON mature Deliberation, I have concluded that the Reasons for publishing this Discourse are stronger and more prevalent than those against it; and upon such a Determination I should be asham'd to hesitate or enter into a Debate with my self, whether I should chuse by not doing my Duty to offend the Author of my Being, or by doing it to incur the Displeasure of my Fellow-Creatures. The Favour of God will certainly accompany those, who, from a sincere Principle, and with an upright Intention, undertake to defend his Cause; and his Providence will as certainly take Care of the Events and Consequences of such a righteous Labour. Besides, I am so far from designing to please the *Arian*, and keep him in good Humour, that, on the contrary, my Aim is to stir him up and disturb him, that he may awaken and seriously weigh our Reasons and Arguments, that may then perhaps communicate to his Mind such Force and convincing Light, as may reclaim him from his dangerous Practice of keeping up Communion with Churches, which, in his Esteem, are Idolatrous. I

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I ACKNOWLEDGE I should be pleased to create this Division, and prevail with the *Arian* to throw off the Mask, and separate from the Orthodox Churches; which I have prov'd before is nothing but his indispensable Duty: Nor should those Churches be at all unwilling, that the *Arian* should withdraw; for tho' by this Means their Assemblies might be a little lessen'd, yet they would be no Sufferers by that Diminution; for the Strength and Beauty of a Church or Congregation does not consist in promiscuous Numbers, but in the Soundness of Doctrine, which appears in the Summary of their Faith, and the Purity of their Lives and Conversation. Nor does any Church, as a Spiritual Society, receive an Accession of Health and Vigour from any heretical and vicious Members, let them be never so many, any more than a human Body grows more strong and active, by a great Collection of gross and noxious Humours: A Dropsy swells and enlarges the Size or Dimensions of a Man, but at the same Time oppresses and enfeebles him.

Peace

38 *Just Prejudices against*

Peace and Concord, established on the same Principles of Religion, and Rules of Practice, ought to be pursu'd with the greatest Ardour; but false Peace and feign'd imaginary Concord are not of such Value, that either the Orthodox should decline the Vindication of their Faith to procure them, or that the *Arian* should purchase them at the Price of Idolatry.

SHOULD Disputes about the Existence of God be set on foot in this sceptical Age, or should the Infidel, in private Discourses and publick Writings, labour to propagate the Disbelief of Christianity, would it be the Mark of a praise-worthy, peaceable Disposition, and discreet Conduct, for any Man to stand by with a cold Indifference, and not endeavour, as far as he is able, to stop the Progress of such destructive Opinions; of which the last subverts the Christian, and the first all Religion whatsoever? In like manner, while *Arian* Hereticks strive to undermine a fundamental Point of the Christian Creed, and at the same time hold Communion with the

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the Orthodox, who, in their Opinion, live in the constant Practice of Idolatry; can it be an unreasonable and rash Attempt to vindicate our Saviour's Divinity, and to dissuade the *Arian* from such a guilty Compliance? If ever Truth is to be spoken, it is to be spoken now, when it is to maintain our holy Religion, which is oppos'd with so much Clamour and Violence, and convince Men of their indispensable Duty of coming out from Societies, which in their Judgment are impure and impious; for next to the Denial of a God, what Crime can be more heinous than our paying to a Creature Divine Worship, as it's ultimate Object? In vain the Gentlemen, who are far gone in the *Arian* Taste, fortify and entrench themselves in metaphysical Subtilties, imaginary Glosses, and strain'd Expositions; they will never be able to maintain this strange Paradox in Divinity, that it is not the Duty of a Christian to renounce Religious Communion with those who pay Supreme Adoration to a Creature.

THEIR

40 *Just Prejudices against*

THEIR Out-cries against Confessions and Declarations of Faith arising from fear of being cut off from the Communion of orthodox Churches may be spar'd, as being nothing to the Purpose in the Argument, which I now urge against them: Have they not the greatest Reason the World to forbear arraigning any such Church with forming Tests and Impositions to exclude them, when, as said before, they ought to save that Church the Labour, and exclude themselves? In this Case, Men of Learning and arguing Heads may, perhaps, be able, by scholastick Fencing, invented Notions, and Turns of Wit, to distinguish away their Duty, and procure to themselves some Satisfaction; but I imagine they will very hardly convince others, who consider impartially their shifting and disingenuous Way of Debating.

To proceed: It is a Matter of Wonder, why Clergymen of *Arian* Principles should contend so earnestly against the Imposition of the Summaries of Faith contain'd in the *First Article* of the

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the Church, and the *Fifth* and *Sixth Answer* of the *Assembly's Catechism*. Multitudes of them have already subscrib'd to the Truth of these Articles; and it must be suppos'd they did it with some secret Meaning and Interpretation of their own, by which they eluded that Confession of Faith. Now I would ask them, Whether they did this with a quiet, unwounded Conscience? If they did, then they have no reason to complain, but they may still go on to do so, and teach others the Way of subscribing without Guilt and Remorse; if not, then let them express their Repentance for so great and deliberate a Sin; let them satisfy the World, that their private Meanings, Equivocations, and fraudulent Subscriptions, to Articles in any Sense whatsoever, in which they believe they can reconcile them to the Scripture, is a criminal Prevarication, unbecoming a Man of Religion or common Probity.

ANOTHER just Prejudice against the *Arian*, is, that we cannot see how, by his Hypothesis, it is possible for any

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42 *Just Prejudices against*

Church to convict their guilty Members of the grossest Heresy ; for the Person accus'd, suppose of *Montanism*, *Tritheism*, *Sabellianism*, or the extravagant Opinions of the *Gnosticks*, is ready to clear himself by this Defence : Gentlemen, he will say, I am ready to subscribe my Assent to the Truth of the Scriptures, and to any Summary of Faith, that can be form'd in the express Words of it ; for I hold no Doctrine in Religion, but what I look upon as warranted by the Christian Revelation ; and since I am ready to give you this Satisfaction concerning my Faith, and you demand no more than this, you must allow me a just Title to Christian Communion. And thus the *Arian* Scheme, as well as the *Socinian*, utterly destroys the Notion of a Heretick, and confounds it with that of the Infidel : for all Hereticks, even the most absurd and monstrous, declare their Belief of the whole Scripture, and are ready to subscribe to the Truth of any Parts of it. If then such a Subscription to a Summary of Faith in express Scripture Terms, and
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nothing more is requir'd by our modern *Arians*, be sufficient to denominate a Christian, and give him a Right to admission into any Church, from which he cannot, but with manifest Injury, be expell'd; then is it evident, that a Heretick is an imaginary and empty Phantom, nor does any such Being exist in Nature; because there is no Man, who professes himself a Christian, but professes himself likewise a Believer of the sacred Writings; which, if he subscribes, he ought to be acknowledg'd as a Brother, and receiv'd into the Bosom of the Church: And if he refuses such a Declaration of his Belief, it must follow, not that he is an Heretick, but a downright Infidel; for the Idea of Heresy involves in it self, as has been said, an Assent to the Revelation of the Gospel. And therefore, according to the Principles of these Men, none but Infidels, who are not Members of the Church, can, with warrantable Authority, be excluded from it; which sounds indeed very oddly. Whence it will likewise follow, that the Churches of Christ may

44 *Just Prejudices against*

be Societies without distinction, compos'd of all sorts of Men, who assert the most monstrous and extravagant Opinions, that have or can be devis'd by whimsical or enthusiastick Fancies : Nor could it be said, that a Church is one Thing, one Body of Men, or one Religious Society ; but an aggregate or a confus'd Multitude, consisting of Members, who maintain, in Religion, Principles vastly different, and sometimes repugnant and contradictory to one another ; who agree only in this, That they profess their Belief of the Gospel of Christ, and will subscribe their Assent to any Sentence expressly contain'd in it ; that is, to the Syllables, Words, and Sounds, without any common Meaning, while in their Minds, they impose upon them various and inconsistent Senses. Thus, as I have said, according to these Men, tho' we may meet with many Pagans or Deists, it is impossible to find a Heretick, which, if their Positions are true, is a mere chimerical Illusion. None of the deform'd and odious Productions of the first fertile Ages, which peopled
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the World with a monstrous Brood of *Free-Thinkers*, not the *Gnosticks* with all their wild and impious Genealogies of Divine Beings, nor the numerous and different Tribes, that hold not the Form of sound Doctrine; no, not those, who maintain'd two Equal or Co-ordinate Gods, One the Author of Good and the Other of Evil, can be stigmatiz'd with the ignominious Character of a Heretick. Nor will one Man be found justly to be censur'd and ejected from the Church, through the past successive Centuries; which, however, have been so ingenious and diligent, that they have made it almost impossible to strike out any new extravagant Notion, or discover any untrodden Way of deviating from the Christian Faith. And this is plain from the following Observation, That our modern Wits, of an heretical Turn of Mind, who disgust the common receiv'd Opinions, and by a strong Biass, lean to strange Doctrines and odd Conceits, are not able to invent, with all their Capacity and Application, any Novel Scheme of Heresy; but are oblig'd

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blig'd to gratify their capricious Fancies, by furbishing up some rusty and obsolete Systems of the past Ages, sometimes that of *Sabellius*, and sometimes that of *Arius*, and with a different Dress, and with the Addition of some fresh Ornaments, impose them on the World as their own Productions; and 'tis surprizing, that when the Catholicks refuse Communion with the Heretical Innovators, they foolishly cry out that they are inhumanly persecuted.

BUT do not the Catholicks, or Orthodox, so I call them for Distinction's sake, justly claim what their Adversaries demand, the Privilege of expounding Scripture for themselves? Now the Orthodox, or *Anti-Arians*, of whom our Churches are compos'd, and are favour'd by the Civil Government, declare that numerous Texts of Holy Scripture do, in their Judgment, assert the Divinity of Christ in the highest Sense of the Word, and have fram'd their Liturgies in Conformity to this Belief, and declar'd that they cannot hold Communion with any who do not embrace

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embrace the same Faith. Now if they impose not this Belief on others, nor compel Men, by any annex'd Pains or Penalties, to comply with their Exposition and Sense of Scripture, but leave them entirely to their Liberty of judging for themselves, which is the Case before us, with what Colour of Reason can the *Arian* cry out of Persecution? Does Persecution, in a proper Sense, include in its Notion a Separation from any whom we look upon as erroneous in Articles that immediately affect our Salvation? Have not Christian Churches a Right to refuse Communion with *Jews, Musselmans, Infidels* or *Hereticks*, whom they permit to follow their own religious Sentiments? I am inform'd, that a Gentleman, suppos'd a Disbeliever of Christ's Divinity, has lately withdrawn himself from the Congregation, of which he was a Member, and gave this Reason for his Separation, that Anti-Scriptural Doxologies were used in that religious Assembly. In this he acted an honest and open Part, and I wish that others of the same Opinion would

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would follow this laudable Example; but in so doing, did that Gentleman think that he persecuted those from whom he withdrew his Communion, or that he impos'd his Opinions upon them in an unwarrantable Manner? And is there not the same Parity of Reason, when a whole religious Society withhold their Communion from one Man, whom they judge an Heretick, as when one Man separates from a whole Assembly, whose Worship he believes is Anti-Scriptural? Why then, this Clamour rais'd, of Persecution, Unchristian Impositions, and Tyrannical Violence, in one Case, when in the other there is nothing but a warrantable Conduct? But the Secret is this, Persecution and Tyrannical Impositions upon the Conscience are condemn'd by all Christians; and therefore the Name of Persecutor or Ecclesiastical Tyrant is most unpopular and odious: These Men therefore seem to cry out that their Adversaries are Persecutors, Destroyers of Christian Liberty, and Promoters of a cruel Tribunal of Inquisition, to make them
black

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black and detestable in the Opinion of the People, especially of their own unjudging Followers, when they have injuriously, even without any shadow of Reason, given them so vile and hateful a Character.

LET us suppose that the *Arian* Hypothesis were the National Religion, embrac'd and encourag'd by the Civil Magistrate, and that the *Anti-Arian* was discountenanc'd and condemn'd; I ask, if the *Arians* should be thus in Power, whether they would receive into the Bosom of their Church, all that would assent to the Truth of the whole Scripture? If they would, then they must acknowledge that the *Anti-Arian*, who, in their Opinion, is the Worshipper of a Creature besides the supreme God, and therefore must, in their Judgment, be an Idolater, has an undeniable Claim to be admitted a Member of their Church; for he will readily acknowledge his Belief of the whole Scriptures, and every part of them: And then it will follow, that, contrary to their indispensable Duty, founded on natural and reveal'd Religion, they will consent to hold religious

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Fellowship with those, who, in their Opinion, are profess'd Idolaters: They cannot exclude them from their Communion, because they will subscribe to the Christian Faith in all the express Words of Scripture, which the *Arian* can desire; nor can the *Arian* suffer them to continue in their Societies, without partaking of their Guilt: Besides, their Churches upon this Principle, may be fill'd with unnatural and inconsistent *Varieties of profess'd Hereticks, Mixtures not only of Trinitarians, and Anti-Trinitarians, but of Papists, Socinians, Muggletonians, Camisars, and all other the most absurd and extravagant Hereticks that ever yet appear'd, or that after Times can produce*; because all these, as said before, will acknowledge the Truth of the whole Gospel, and give their Assent to any Summary of Belief, compos'd only of express Portions of Scripture, the Truth of which they all confess, tho' they vastly differ in the Sense and Interpretation of them. Yet this Heap of repugnant Materials, this monstrous and confus'd Assemblage of Persons

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sons of opposite Principles, would, notwithstanding, be reckon'd one Christian Church, without the least Similitude of Sentiments and Ideas, and without any Bond of Union or Agreement, in any thing but in Letters, and Sounds, and Words of no settled Meaning. But if the *Arian*, when favour'd by the Civil Government, should be tempted to renounce his present Maxim, and follow the Example of all sovereign Communities that have been converted to Christianity since its first Institution; all which, as far as I am instructed, have compiled Articles or Confessions of their Faith: Suppose, I say, the *Arians* in Power, in imitation of all other Christian Churches, should draw up a short Declaration of their Belief, tho' not in express Words of Scripture, and recommend it to all their Members to be subscrib'd, but without any threaten'd Punishment, to extort their Compliance, whom they leave at full Liberty to profess their Assent or refuse it; if, in such a Case, the *Anti-Arians*, or any other Denomination of Christians, should cry out against this

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Conduct, and accuse the Governors of the *Arian* Church of Persecution, Violence, and unchristian Impositions, would not the *Arian* reply, Gentlemen, we are astonish'd to hear you charge us with Persecution, when we punish no Man for disagreeing with our Scheme : Does not Persecution always suppose some considerable Pain or Penalty to be inflicted in Case of Non-compliance in Matters of Religion ? Can then such a Conduct be stiled by that odious Name, where no Suffering, Corporal or Pecuniary, is annex'd to enforce Obedience ? You may, if you please, call it Perjury, Treason, or Felony ; but why Persecution ? Why do you cry out against unjust Impositions, when nothing is impos'd, for nothing is impos'd where you are left at Liberty to refuse Conformity to it ? These Exclamations then against our Confessions of Faith, which you may subscribe or not, since no Penal Law enjoins it, are idle and ridiculous. The *Arians* will therefore say to their Adversaries, that their Complaints are most absurd and groundless,
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and without doubt will tell them, that they must be great Masters of Calumny and invective Eloquence, and endow'd with singular Abilities, in raising clamorous and lamentable Outcries; since they scream out, as if mortally wounded, when not a Hair of their Heads is hurt, when no Exile, no Imprisonment, no Pains of Body or Forfeiture of Estate, enforces Subscription to any Sense of sacred Texts. And should their Adversaries urge, that by the Declaration to be subscrib'd, suppose it be, that Christ is no more than a dignify'd Creature, any of the Clergy, who could not comply with it, should be depriv'd of their Livelihood, by the Peoples withdrawing from their Ministry, according to the Advice and Direction of their spiritual Governors, should cry out, that this is equivalent to Persecution and a violent Imposition; would not the *Arians* reply, That their Incapacity of holding Communion with the Establish'd Worship, whence such Deprivation follow'd, was the necessary Effect of their own Principles, and a Disability brought upon them

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them by their own Choice? That what Sufferings or want of Maintenance should ensue upon the People's withdrawing from them, whom they judge to be Idolaters, is but the Consequence of that People's performing their uncontested and indispensable Duty: and must that be represented as Persecution? The *Arian*, in Power, will doubtless tell them, that they act upon true Protestant Principles; for, when this enlighten'd Nation renounc'd the Church of *Rome*, the Popish Clergy, who openly maintain'd gross Errors, and liv'd in the Practice of Superstition and idolatrous Worship of Saints and Angels, were, by lawful Power, or by the People's desertion of them, depriv'd of their Benefices and Ecclesiastical Revenues; and will then say to the *Anti-Arian*, Do you look upon this as unchristian Violence and Persecution? It will be in vain, they will say, to urge in this Place, that the Papists held Principles of Religion, that were inconsistent with their Duty to their Prince, and destructive of the Peace of the State; and therefore
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their Clergy might justly be depriv'd; for they will reply, that our first Reformers justify'd their Separation from the Church of *Rome*, upon the Account of their corrupt Doctrines, and idolatrous Practices, abstracting from Reasons of State, that concern'd the Magistrate: And supposing the Papists had held any Doctrines that made them obnoxious to the Civil Government, yet will they say, you will surely allow that our Reformers were warranted in withdrawing from their Societies, upon this Belief, that they were guilty of the grossest Errors and impious Practices; and tho', upon this Discharge of their Duty, the Deprivation of many of the Popish Clergy unavoidably follow'd, will you for this condemn our Reformers, and inveigh against them as Persecutors?

BESIDES, the *Arian* will ask the *Anti-Arians* why they would not of themselves renounce their Communion, tho' no Summary of Faith should be offer'd to them? They may say to them, Since we declare that we pay supreme Worship to Christ, a Creature only in our
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Opinion, because, as we believe, we are commanded so to do; we are, however, condemn'd by you as Idolaters for doing so; if then you are sincere and upright Christians, you would look upon it as your Duty to separate your selves from us, of your own Accord, lest you should be involv'd in the same Guilt; why then do you not go out of your selves, and withdraw your Communion from us, as the Holy Martyrs of the Christian Church refus'd that of Idolatrous Assemblies, whatever Sufferings you should undergo for performing so plain and necessary a Duty?

SHOULD, I say, the Disbelief of Christ's Divinity get the Civil Power on its Side, and become the publick establish'd Religion of the Kingdom, and should the *Anti-Arians* make a Noise of terrible Persecution, and Unscriptural Impositions, when no Pain or Penalty accompany'd the publick Declaration of the *Arian* Faith, I cannot imagine what the *Anti-Arian* could reply to such Reasons and Expostulations as I have suppos'd their Adversaries would use. Let the

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the *Arian* then turn the Tables, and consider whether this be not the very same Case, while the Believers of Christ's Divinity have the Favour of the Civil Magistrate, and require no more than their own Christian Privilege of renouncing Communion with such as they esteem incapacitated for it, while they inflict no corporal or pecuniary Punishment, and bring upon them no Suffering or Inconvenience, but what it was the evident Duty of the *Arians* to have brought upon themselves by their voluntary Separation from such Assemblies.

THE last Prejudice I shall mention against the Modern Scheme, arises from the Contemplation of the Behaviour and Conduct of those Clergymen, who, having imbib'd *Arian* Notions, do, notwithstanding, become and continue, from their free Choice, Pastors and Spiritual Guides of *Anti-Arian* or Catholic Congregations. Is it not wonderful and exceedingly shocking, to observe how these Gentlemen engage in a Charge of such high Importance, and

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at the same Time are determin'd not to perform the Duties of their Sacred Office; as by refusing to instruct the People in Points of Belief, that concern their Salvation, to dissuade and press them to avoid those Practices, that are inconsistent with the Favour of God and future Felicity. The chief Article of the Christian Institution, is that which concerns the Divinity of Christ, and the most solemn Duties of it, particularly the Acts of Adoration paid to him as One with the Self-existent Eternal God: Now the *Arian* Ministers do not, as far as I am inform'd, ever, in their Sermons and publick Discourses, instruct the People that Christ is no more than a Creature, and that therefore they should look upon him as One of no higher Character; nor should by any Means entertain this unscriptural and impious Notion of him, that he is God Supreme: Nor do they, in their Sermons before the Blessed Sacrament, dissuade and conjure the People from paying in that solemn Service such Acts of Adoration that terminate in our Lord

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as the ultimate Object of our Worship. One has just Reason to suspect the Principles of such Men, that are so repugnant to Piety, and inconsistent with that great Sincerity, which they pretend to. Can a Man undertake the Care and Cure of Souls, and bind himself in the Sacred Relation of a Pastor, and at the same Time think himself excus'd from the necessary Duties of it; which are to improve the People in spiritual Knowledge, to correct their Mistakes in religious Belief, and reform their Lives from evil and impious Practices? How then comes it to pass, that they think themselves excus'd from informing their Congregations about the chief Article of Christian Faith, in which, as those Pastors believe, the People are vastly mistaken; as well as from dissuading them earnestly to avoid the idolatrous Practice, for so it must be in the Opinion of such Guides, of giving Divine Worship to the Son of God, without directing it further to a Superior Self-existent Being? These Gentlemen think it their Duty to confirm the Judg-

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ments of the People, concerning other heretical Doctrines, as Occasion requires; they strenuously preach against the Institution of *Mahomet*, the Doctrines of the *Papists*, the Scheme of the *Socinians*, and various other erroneous Sects: But the Orthodox Christians, in the Opinion of such Pastors, lie under at least as great and as dangerous a Delusion, in a fundamental Matter of Faith, as any Hereticks whatsoever, as will easily appear upon the Comparison; why then is their Duty in this Point so entirely neglected? The Pastors of whom we are speaking, think themselves oblig'd to press their Auditors to avoid Intemperance, Fraud, Incontinency, Revenge, and other immoral Actions; yet, at the same Time, do not think it their Duty to warn and press the People to forbear Idolatrous Worship, which those Ministers know their People constantly practise, in adoring their Saviour as God Supreme. How the conceal'd *Arian* Clergy, that have the Pastoral Care of a Church or Congregation, can defend themselves against this Charge, I cannot

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not foresee. When once, in Conversation, I ask'd a Clergyman, who express'd and pleaded for atheistical and unchristian Notions, how he, who had espous'd such Principles, could continue to officiate as a Preacher and Pastor to a Christian Church? His Answer was, That he did it to get his Living; that he was brought up in that Way for his Maintenance; and that he did the People no Hurt, but always preach'd to them in their own Way; or Words fully to that Effect; and if the *Arians*, who continue Pastors of Orthodox Churches, can give a better Reason for their Conduct in this Matter, I should be well pleas'd to receive it.

BUT what Reason, however, has the the Lay-*Arian* to complain of rigorous Impositions and Persecution, and why does not he withdraw from the Communion of the *Anti-Arian* Churches, which he judges are so highly criminal? The Example of the Gentleman above-mention'd, who, for that Reason, left such a Congregation, is very commendable; and why should not others of the
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same Perswasion imitate this Precedent, that our Religious Assemblies may no longer continue unnatural and deform'd Bodies, compos'd of inconsistent and incompatible Members, that must account one another Hereticks and Idolaters ?



Articles of Faith depend upon Inference and Argumentation, and are therefore left to Consequences.

SOME Gentlemen have asserted, that the supreme Divinity of our Saviour cannot be allow'd to be an Article of the Christian Faith, because it is not express'd in so many Words in the holy Scriptures; that is, that He and the Father, with the Holy Spirit, are the One Eternal God; which Proposition, say they, is only collected, or pretended to be collected, by Reason and Argument from those inspir'd Writings, which give to the Son the same Attributes that are ascrib'd to the Father. Now, say they, an Article of Faith is not

depend on Consequences. 63

not left to Consequences; which is only roundly asserted, but not prov'd. In opposition to these Reasoners, I undertake to make good this Proposition, *That all Articles of Religious Faith, as well Natural as Christian, are built upon Conclusions infer'd by Discourse or Argumentation, from right Premises, and so are all left to Consequences:* Which Province I shall perform in the following Manner.

ALL certain Knowledge must arise, as I believe will easily be granted, from Intuition or Demonstration. The first of which must be produc'd by self-evident Principles, the last by Deductions drawn by the Force of Reasoning from those Principles that want no Proof, and are indeed incapable of any. Now, I affirm, that there are no such self-evident Principles in Religion, by which we can convey to another the certain Knowledge of any Object of Belief. If there were any Divine Notion so clear in it self, that, upon the very rehearsing of the Words, it would immediately procure a full Assent by its own intrinsic Light,

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Light, unassisted by Argument and Demonstration, then the Article of the Existence of God would, in the first place, be of this Kind. Now it is very plain, that this Article, which is the Spring and Foundation of all Certainty in Matters of Religion, is capable of Demonstration, and has actually been demonstrated by *St. Paul* to the *Athenians*, by Reason and Argument, from his Works of Creation and Providence : Nor had all the Wits of *Athens* Sagacity and Skill enough in Disputation to reply, that so great and necessary a Point of Religion, as the Being of the supreme God, could never be left to Consequences. And how many celebrated Writers have, in all Ages, followed *St. Paul's* Example, and deduc'd that pious and fundamental Article of Religion, from clear and undeniable Premises ? Now it is plain, that self-evident Principles, that are immediately assented to by virtue of their own Light, are never to be demonstrated ; for it would plainly imply a Contradiction, that what is evident of it self, can be prov'd
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by Reason or Argument. For Instance, That the Whole is equal to all its Parts ; that a Thing cannot Exist and not Exist at the same Time ; That two Propositions contradictory, cannot be true : And so in Morals, that every Man should do what is best for himself, or most conducive to his Happiness ; That all have a Right, to what is their own, and the like. Such self-evident and undemonstrable Principles, the Mind embraces by immediate Inspection or Apprehension : Were they capable of being prov'd, it would follow, that it would be impossible for us to acquire any Knowledge at all, because there could be no stop in the Train of our Inferences and Deductions ; for the Premises of every Conclusion being themselves always to be demonstrated by Others, our Reasoning must proceed, *in Infinitum*.

Now, as I have said, no Principles of Religion are of this self-evident Nature, particularly, that of the Being of God, on which all other Articles of Divine Belief necessarily depend. If it be urg'd, that this Proposition, *There is a God,*

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God, is written, imprinted and engraven in our Hearts; which metaphorical Terms must mean, that it is a Proposition inborn and congenite with us in our first Formation; then I must own, that I am unable to apprehend how such Knowledge can reside in the Mind, before the Mind does actually know: How can a Proposition be apprehended before there is any Apprehension; and how can intellectual Ideas be perceived by the Understanding, when, as yet, it sleeps in the Embrio, and has exercised no Perception? But of this Subject I have more fully discours'd in the *Preface to Creation*, to which I refer the Reader.

BUT let it be allow'd, that the Existence of God is an innate Article of Religious Knowledge, and existed in our Minds from our first Conception in the Womb; can we alledge it as a Proof to convince an Atheist, who disbelieves the Existence of a God, and denies all inbred Ideas of the Divine Being? Must we not demonstrate that Proposition by Reason and Argument, from the visible Works of God's Creation, as *St. Paul* has done; and

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and whose Example many other excellent, tho' uninspir'd Persons have followed, to confute such Adversaries? And it is a melancholy Reflexion, that there are too many such to be met with in this Christian Nation.

HAVING thus shewn, that this great and first Article of Faith is capable of Demonstration, and therefore left to Consequences, or built on the Deductions of Reason, it will be easy to shew, that all Reveal'd Articles of the Christians Creed, are of the same Nature.

IN the first Place, it must be made appear, That the Books of the Holy Scriptures are the Works of inspir'd Writers, and that they contain the Revelation of the Will of God, before our Assent is due to any Article of the Christian Faith, which is declar'd in them: And can this be done without Argumentation and discursive Deductions? Will the Deist or Infidel be convinc'd by your bare Affirmation? Or will you tell him, that the Scriptures are certainly true, tho' their Truth is indemonstrable; that is, that it is a self-evident Principle?

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And when the Scriptures are prov'd to be wrote by Divine Inspiration, and therefore to be infallibly true, not only the supreme Divinity of the Son of God is collected from them by Reasoning and Inference, but all the other Points of Christian Faith. Nor without Deduction and Argument will it appear, that the *Jews* could have any certain Knowledge of the Immortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection of the Body. And this way of Arguing and coming at a Truth of the highest Importance to Religion, our Saviour justifies, while he prov'd to the *Sadducees*, by a Train of Inferences, those essential Doctrines. And as to the Revelation of the Gospel, we cannot give our Assent to any Article of Faith contain'd in it, but by the Exercise of Reason in forming Deductions. Before our Belief is requir'd, it must appear to us, that such certain Words, rang'd in such Order, are found in that Scripture, which contains any Point of our Creed; which cannot be demonstrated but by an Inference from this Principle, that our Senses employ'd about
their

depend on Consequences. 69

their proper Object cannot be deceiv'd ; and which Proposition it self is not self-evident, but is capable of further Demonstration. Besides, those Wordsrang'd in that Order, are not the original Words of the inspired Writer, when Translated into the Vulgar Tongue ; and then the far greater part of Christians, who are ignorant of the original Languages, must use Argument and Reason from the Nature of the Thing, before they give their Assent ; that is, that the Translators were not deceiv'd Themselves, nor did deceive Others, in rendring the Original in the Way they have done : And especially those, who are so illiterate, that they cannot so much as read the Translation, must be suppos'd to reason thus with themselves, That it is morally impossible, that their Teachers, and Thousands of Others, should, without any Motive, conspire to impose a Fraud upon them in a Matter of such Importance ; and therefore they believe those Words are found in the Gospel, which they are told are there ; and still, the Deductions abovemention'd, are to be

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be us'd before they can come to any Article of Faith: But of this more in a Writing to be publish'd.

I HOPE it will now appear, that no Article of Faith can be nam'd, which is not built on Argument, and left to the Support of Consequences; and if it be no just Prejudice to the Belief of God's Existence, that it is demonstrable, and cannot be evinc'd, when we dispute with an Atheist, but by Inference and Deduction; why should it be an Objection to the Certainty of this Christian Article, *Christ is Supreme Eternal God*, that our Belief of it arises in like Manner from Inference and Deduction?

BUT it is urg'd that, in deducing the Article of our Saviour's Divinity, from Scripture Passages, there is a Mixture of fallible Reason, and that this renders it uncertain. To which I answer, If it be true that our Conclusions are not certain, because Reason is employ'd in drawing them from fit Premises, then we have no Certainty in our Minds of any other Articles of divine Belief; all which, as I have demonstrated, are
built

depend on Consequences 71

built on Inferences form'd by Reason: And as the Adversary's Assertion destroys entirely all religious Science and Belief, of which there is not one Principle self-evident, so it utterly subverts all Knowledge whatsoever, and introduces again into the World, the Uncertainty of the *Porronian* Schools, and the Scepticism of the new Academy. For since all our Knowledge, of what Kind soever, relies on Consequences, form'd by Discourse and Reason; and since, if these Gentlemen judge aright, we can have no Certainty of any Proposition that Way; then this at least is certain, that nothing can be known, except a very few common Notions, or undemonstrable Principles, which likewise are made idle and insignificant by the Adversary's Rule; for if such Maxims, clear in themselves, are of any Service to Mankind, it is from hence, that, by the Help of their Reason, they may draw instructive Conclusions from them, and so proceed to enrich the Mind with a Train of useful Consequences: But if the Operation of fallible Reason, in the Production of
such

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such Consequences, allays and sinks their Certainty, then it is most clear, that all our Knowledge arises no higher than to a bare probable Opinion, and no Certainty is left in the Mind of Man, which is conscious only of Consequences, except in a very few self-evident Propositions. Yet those who are bred in Schools, and are Masters of Sciences and liberal Arts, especially the Mathematicians, will never allow that they have no Certainty of any of their Conclusions, because they are drawn by fallible Reason; especially the last will stiffly maintain that their immediate and necessary Conclusions are no less certain than the Principles from whence they are infer'd.

THAT which led these Gentlemen into this Error, I imagine is this, that the Truth of Propositions, contain'd in the express Words of the inspir'd Writers, did not rely on the Operation or Assistance of deceivable Reason; but then they did not reflect, that without the Interposition of Reason it could never be known, whether the Scriptures were
indeed

depend on Consequences. 73

indeed the Works of inspir'd Writers ; and when the Difficulties about that Conclusion are remov'd, it is still incumbent on the Christian to shew that therefore those Books must be assented to ; which can only stand on a Conclusion drawn from this Principle, that infinite Wisdom cannot be deceiv'd, nor infinite Goodness deceive any. And now, I hope that the Understanding of our Adversaries, who profess that they search after Truth with an upright Mind, and unprejudic'd Application, will be open'd so far, as to see such clear and convincing Light ; and that they will no longer insist that an Article of Faith cannot be left to Consequences, nor that any Proposition can be certainly true, if Reason has been interested in the Demonstration of it. But, I shall not proceed further on this Subject, the Reader may find it manag'd at large, in an *Answer to a Discourse concerning Scripture Consequences.*

THE learned Author of that Answer does, in my Judgment, support

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his Positions with clear and solid Arguments, and succeeds in his Reasoning to that Degree, that he triumphs all the Way; which I imagine must not be wholly ascrib'd to the Goodness of his Cause, but in some Measure to his good Sense and Abilities in Disputation.

THIS Writer has, in the Book I have mention'd, sustain'd an important Notion concerning the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, which seems probable and defensible. He affirms, that the Phrase *Eternal Generation* is no where found in the Sacred Writings: That *Son of God* and *Messiah* were used as Synonymous Terms by the *Jews*; which, likewise, I remember is asserted by Mr. *Locke*, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*; and therefore, he says, he can see no Reason why Filiation, or the relative Appellation, *Son of God*, may not result from God's constituting or ordaining Christ, as Mediator, and conferring on him the Power and Authority of executing that high Office. Thus when it is
said,

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said, *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten Thee*; since the Term *Begotten*, as well as *Generation*, must certainly here be Metaphorical, this Sense of it may reasonably be given, I have constituted and declar'd Thee Mediator of the New Covenant; and the Expression, *This Day*, favours this Interpretation. It is true, the *Jews* cry'd out, when our Saviour acknowledg'd himself to be the Son of God, that he made himself equal with God; not that this Appellation included such an Equality, but because, from many Places of Scripture, they well knew that divine incommunicable Attributes were ascrib'd to the Person who was Messiah, or the Son of God; and when our Saviour own'd himself to be the Son of God, or him who was sent, they believ'd that he therefore assum'd to himself the Divine Attributes that accompanied that Character. Our Author believes that those, who assert and explain an eternal Generation of the Son, as an eternal Emanation from the Father, may very well defend their Explanation against

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all the Force of their Adversaries; but he rather chuses the other, as a preferable Interpretation, that is, that the Appellation, *Son of God*, belongs to the divine Word, as Mediator. He does, however, insist that this different Explication of the Manner of his Generation, does by no Means hinder the Orthodoxy of either, in the great Article of the Trinity, while each professes his Belief that Christ is *Eternal Supreme God*, tho' they express their Sentiments in different Terms. And our Author further declares, that the Sense which he has mention'd, in which Generation may be, as he believes, reasonably refer'd to God's constituting of Christ the Mediator, cannot, as far as he can find, be invalidated by any Texts, that occur in the inspir'd Books. And, if this be so, then, as I have been always inclin'd to embrace those Notions in Religion and Philosophy, that are incumber'd with the least Difficulties, and the most free from Clouds and Obscurity, I should be inclin'd to receive the Interpretation mention'd, as that which eases my Conceptions

depend on Consequences. 77

ceptions most about this sublime Object, and effectually cuts off the Arguments, which the *Arian* (tho' unjustly) brings for the Inequality and Inferiority of the Son, in respect of the Father, from the Filiation of the One and Paternity of the Other.

I SHALL here observe, that in the important Controversy now on foot concerning the Divinity of our Saviour, the *Arianizing* Sect affect to reproach their Opponents with immoderate Heat and Loss of Temper: When a Writer of Gravity and Learning has urg'd considerable and weighty Reasons against their new Scheme, they presently cry out; Oh, he is a very angry Man; as if that was a sufficient Confutation of his Arguments: And this is so frequently practis'd, as if it was the Word given out by the Party, to weaken the Credit of their Adversaries, and invalidate their Reasoning. I cannot conceive what these Gentlemen mean by this Accusation, since the Writings of their Antagonists appear to me generally unobnoxious to this Censure; but perhaps, as
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one would be tempted to think, from their own weak and unanimated Performances, in which their cold Expression usually contains yet colder Reasoning, they really believe that whatever is writ with Life and Spirit, let the Discourse be ever so clear and solid, is the Production of the Spleen, and the Mark of a criminal Passion. But let these Gentlemen think as they please, I acknowledge, that in a Debate of such a high Nature as this, I had rather feel a warm and lively Disposition, than the indifferent *Laodicean* Temper, and would be willing that my Zeal in defending the Catholick Christian Faith should arise to an immoderate Heat, rather than I should be coldly receiv'd, when I came to make up my Account, and be reproach'd as one, that betray'd my Master, and tamely stood by while contumacious Hereticks despoil'd him of his Godhead. It is certainly better to be hot here, than in a sadder Place and worse Company hereafter.

SUPPOSE it were true, that some *Anti-Arians*, either mov'd by the vast
Impor-

depend on Consequences. 79

Importance of the Subject, or from their native Temper, or from great Provocation by rude and unchristian Usage, have sometimes exceeded the Rules of Decency and regular Demeanour, which does by no means affect the Cause they maintain, nor weaken the Force of their Disputation, can none of their Adversaries be justly censur'd as angry Men? What, not those froward Men, who cry out, that they have been cruelly and unmercifully persecuted, tho' we hear of none of their Pecuniary or Corporal Sufferings; and that the *Western* Inquisition, which they underwent, rivals the bloody Tribunals of *Spain* and *Portugal*? Which can appear true only to those, who are enlighten'd with the Loss of their Eyes, and lie under a deplorable Desertion of common Sense. Whoever is angry, and raves on the *Arian* Side of the Question, is always a Person of great Temper and fine Humanity; but when any Man opposes it in good earnest, tho' with all the Decency and good Humour consistent with his Duty in the Defence of his Creed, he is presently repre-

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represented as a furious and violent Writer.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, that Polemical Debates, of an inferior Nature, should be manag'd only with calm and close Reasoning, as not requiring vehement and pathetick Expression; but in such Controversial Discourses, that are of the greatest Importance and Concern, the very Vitals of the Christian Religion, a warmer and more animated Stile is useful and becoming. In such Cases, not only the clearest and strongest Argumentation should be pursu'd, but the Diction should be enliven'd with so much Fire and Spirit, as may set it above doubt, that the Author is in earnest.

Two sorts of Writers in this, as well as other Controversies, are blameable for a contrary Conduct to that which I have mention'd; one sort are those who labour hard to moderate the Heat of their Temper, and unartfully affect to appear in good Humour; these Men endeavour to supply the want of Reason, and strengthen an impotent and languishing Disputation by declamatory

Excur-

depend on Consequences. 81

Excursions, impertinent Eloquence, and a pert insipid Style. And, notwithstanding they decline, through all the Debate, to close and grapple with their Opponent, but keep at Distance from the main Points in Controversy, while they pursue other Subjects, where they believe they shall succeed better, and be able to prove Something that is nothing to the Purpose; yet when their insignificant Discourse is ended, they congratulate Themselves upon their imaginary Victory, and enjoy their empty Performance with great Satisfaction and Alacrity.

IT is a blameable Conduct, when a Writer about Matters of the highest Consequence, in a low and languishing Way, after many cautious Steps and slow Advances, deliberate Pauses and Hesitations, turns and winds, and labours till at last, with much ado, either for want of Sincerity or Capacity, he makes his Meaning out; and tells the Reader in a lame Manner, what it is he would be at. If a Writer of Controversy does not assert his Cause with Resolution,

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solution, Zeal and open Integrity, the Reader will be tempted to think, by his cold and trimming Demeanour, that he is a false Brother and disputes Boory, or that the Side of the Question, which he has taken, cannot, without the greatest Difficulty, be defended. One is apt to suspect a Cause, where the Disputant, by a great Apparatus of elaborate and dress'd Explanations; endless Savings, Guards and Limitations; nice Distinctions, and Positions heap'd upon Positions, endeavours to secure his Passage and clear his Way to the Point in Hand.



Confidence and boastful Pretensions to great Parts and Learning, no Proof of any Sects being in the Right.

I CANNOT forbear observing, in this Place, that when any bold and conceited Person has taken it into his Head to oppose and affront the receiv'd and Establish'd Religion of his Country, and
learned

depend on Consequences. 83

learned to ridicule, with thread-bare Jests, the sacred Mysteries of the Gospel, he is admitted to the Favour of the Patrons and Revivers of ancient Heresies, declar'd a Man of unvulgar Parts, and dignify'd with the Title of a Wit. The *Socinians*, but a few Years ago, were reckon'd such refin'd Spirits, and Men of such elevated Genius, that it was a Temptation to unsettled Youth, to favour their Opinions, that they might be accounted Men of Sense. I was at that Time often told by Persons inclin'd to those Doctrines, that they scarce knew a Man of Distinction, for Parts and Capacity, but he was a Favourer of their Principles. Mr. *Firmin's* Friends suggested this frequently in Company, and much valued themselves on the Number of their Proselytes among the most eminent Persons, Divines as well as Laymen. Then the *Socinian* triumph'd, and his Scheme of Divinity was the great Heresy in Fashion. But notwithstanding their formidable Power and boasted Numbers, who hop'd to over-run *Great Britain*, and

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bring it under the Dominion of the Doctors of *Poland*; yet I have liv'd to see this *Socinian* Usurpation of the Empire of Wit, demolish'd by another prevailing Sect. The *Arian* Leaders having muster'd their Forces, and rais'd a fierce Rebellion against them, have sunk this arrogant and once growing Sect, disfeiz'd them of the Honour and Credit which they presum'd to engross, and by drawing off their Followers, have left them so low, that now they are scarce considerable enough to make a Party; and behold, the *Arian* reigns in their stead! And now the Cry of Persons of loose and unsettled Principles, that feel a perpetual Itch after Novelty, is on the Side of the Leaders of this Sect: almost all, that take a Fancy for Heresy, and have a mind to be thought Men of Genius and extraordinary Sagacity, strike in with this rising Party: And now they tell us, with unblushing Assurance, that all, distinguish'd by superior Wit and exalted Parts; all who merit the Appellation of great Men, either in Church or State, are openly or secretly of their
Opinion;

depend on Consequences. 85

Opinion ; for it seems, that the Title of a Man of Sense is annex'd, by these Disposers of Honour and Merit, to the Espousers and Friends of *Arian* Principles, as before they were confer'd upon the now abandon'd *Socinian*. Of this Observation, which I know to be true, I would make this Use. I entreat the Gentlemen of the *Arian* way, not to rely with great Confidence on the Truth of their peculiar Doctrines. The *Soci-nians*, their Predecessors, tho' now decry'd and out of Fashion, were, but a few Years ago, as much assur'd of their Scheme of Divinity, as the *Arian* is of his at this Time: They were in as great Vogue, and had as many zealous Disciples, Patrons and Admirers, as the present Sect, that has prevail'd over them ; nor were they less esteem'd and cry'd up for their Penetration and critical Abilities, than, in their Turn, their Rivals now are. Then let the *Arian* reflect, that notwithstanding this, by a sudden Revolution, those great Leaders and their Followers, are fallen and deserted, and their Scheme of Religion look'd on
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as ill concerted and indefensible. Let me then ask the *Arians*, If Men not inferior to your selves, nor less sincere and diligent in searching after Truth; Men so much applauded and admir'd for able Disputants, supported by such Numbers of Followers, and who made so considerable a Figure in this and a much greater in foreign Countries, were, notwithstanding, grossly mistaken, as you your selves confess they were; why may not you be mistaken likewise, notwithstanding the great Capacities you pretend to? You cannot be more confident that your Notions are right, than the *Socinians* were that theirs were so; nor have you greater Advantages or Securities to protect you from Error, than they had. The *Socinians* were lately, at least as much renown'd for Polemical Discourses, and Writings, as you are now: They were by great Numbers reputed Giants in Debate, Men of a *Saracen's* Face and Limbs; Sons of *Anack*, whose Pens were like a Weaver's Beam, that demolished, with Ease, all Opposers; yet this mighty Race

depend on Consequences. 87

Race soon dwindled into Dwarfs, at least they were reduced to the common Stature, and are now no longer fear'd or respected. This Reflection may justly moderate your great Assurance, that you are in the right, and dispose you to some Degrees of Diffidence and Modesty.

I DO not by these last Reflections, intend a Confutation of the *Arian* Scheme; but to reduce, if it be not impracticable, the exorbitant Confidence of their Leaders, and to bring them in part down, from their tow'ring Heights of imaginary Certainty, that thus their Minds may be prepar'd by a just Sense of Human Fallibility, to admit the Light, and weigh impartially the Strength of our Arguments; which is nothing more than the Greatness and Importance of the Subject demand of them.

F I N I S.

...doubled into two, as
least they were reduced to the common
measure, and are now no longer heard
or respected. This Reflection may
justly moderate your great Assurance,
that you are in the right, and dispose
you to some Degrees of Humbleness and
Modesty.

I do not by these last Reflections
intend a Contention of the Affairs
of Science, but to reduce, if it be not
practicable, the exorbitant Confidence
of their Heads, and to bring them in
part down, from their towering Heights
of imaginary Certainty, that thus
their Minds may be prepared by a just
Scale of Human Fallibility, to admit
the Light, and weigh impartially the
Strength of our Arguments; which is
nothing more than the Greatness and
Importance of the Subject demand of
them.

FINIS

